U.1. Individual Biographies

Interview U-0607
Timothy Jacobs
11 March 2012

Field notes – 2
Transcript – 3

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

FIELD NOTES – TIMOTHY JACOBS

Interviewee:	Timothy Jacobs
Interviewer	Lorraine Ahearn
Interview date:	March 11, 2012
Location:	Jacobs home, Maxton, NC
Length:	58:41

THE INTERVIEWEE. Timothy Jacobs, a community activist and member of the Tuscarora Indian Tribe, focuses primarily on his role in the February 1, 1988 armed hostage-taking at the *Robesonian* newspaper in Lumberton, North Carolina along with co-conspirator Eddie Hatcher, and subsequent acquittal in federal court in *United States v. Timothy Jacobs.* Hatcher also discusses his educational background at the Red School House in Minneapolis-St. Paul, founded by the American Indian Movement, his early anti-nuclear work in Robeson County, North Carolina, how he became involved in activism over the death of Jimmy Earl Cummings and jail inmate Billy McKellar, and community perceptions of Sheriff Hubert Stone and District Attorney Joe Freeman Britt, as well as the murder of Lumbee Indian judicial candidate Julian Pierce.

THE INTERVIEWER. Lorraine Ahearn is a doctoral student in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Her area of study is the media history of marginalized groups.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. The interview was conducted in the living room of Mr. Jacobs' home outside Maxton on a Sunday morning, after he had attended religious services and business meetings. The interview was preceded by a performance of a song of welcome and thanksgiving by Mr. Jacobs on a painted drum.

We spoke without interruption for one hour, and a brief sound problem at the beginning of the tape due to electrical interference dissipates. Major themes were Jacobs' commitment to the Tuscarora community, the disappointment in what he perceives as the appropriation and "selling out" by Lumbee leaders of Indian interests and identity in Robeson County and the negative toll that his activism has exacted upon his personal life, his financial and occupational security and above all, his physical health. His is a narrative of anger and betrayal, but also conviction to generational heritage that he believes must be honored and upheld. He is deeply connected to the Drowning Creek area, as he knows it, and this is where he belongs.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

TRANSCRIPT: TIMOTHY JACOBS

Interviewee: TJ Timothy Jacobs

Interviewer: LA Lorraine Ahearn

Date: March 11, 2012

Location: Maxton, North Carolina

Length: 58:41

BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW (Note: initial electrical sound interference is brief)

Lorraine Ahearn: My name is Lorraine Ahearn. I am a doctoral student at UNC-Chapel Hill. Today is March the eleventh, two thousand twelve. I'm here with Timothy Jacobs at his home in Maxton, North Carolina. We are doing an oral history interview today. The topic is primarily about, first of all, about the incident in nineteen eighty-eight, February first, nineteen eighty-eight, the taking of the *Robesonian* newspaper with Eddie Hatcher. But we'll also be talking about Timothy's work with the Tuscarora Nation. So if we could just start off talking about your family background. I wanted to ask you where you were born, and when?

Timothy Jacobs: OK. I was born in Lumberton, North Carolina, July the twenty-fifth, nineteen sixty-eight. My family is from Pembroke, North Carolina, and we were known to be around the Lumber River, or what was known to us as the Drowning Creek area, ever since the early seventeen hundreds. I come from the Tuscarora Indian Nation and have been part of the Tuscarora Indian Nation all my life.

L.A. Can you tell me anything about who your, who you are descended from?

T.J. My great-great-great-great mother, her name was Mary Ann Lowrie, and she was a sister to Henry Berry Lowrie. During the days of what was known as the Henry Berry

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

Lowrie Wars, my grandmother, Mary Ann, as we would call her, she played a very active role at that time in history. And those are the kind of things that I think have been forgotten, if you will, throughout history. I also descended from a family known as "the original twenty-two," who were given federal status in the nineteen thirties by the federal government in a study that was done of Native American people here. And my great-grandmother, her name was Lillie Jane Brooks, she was one of the first members of the original twenty-two who were recognized as being full-blooded Indians. Her photographs, her family history, are in the Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

And so, I come from a long line of Tuscarora people, who have fought in Robeson County, in one form or another, for many generations. The injustices that Henry Berry Lowrie were fighting for -- fighting against -- in the eighteen hundreds, were no different than I was fighting against in the nineteen eighties. So history has a way of repeating itself. If it's in your blood, if it's in your DNA, then that's what you do. You do what your ancestors did. You fight for justice, you fight for survival and you fight for the right to exist. I think that history will show that the Tuscarora people have fought for generations for the right just to exist here in the state of North Carolina.

L.A. Can you tell me about your educational background?

T.J. I graduated from Purnell Swett High School in 1986. I also graduated from what was known as the (culturally-based K-12 Native American) Red School House in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1986. I came back from (laughs) Minneapolis-St. Paul's in 1986 and the school in Robeson County was still going on, so my mother enrolled me back into Purnell Swett High School. So I actually have two diplomas. Two high school

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

diplomas. And I was about to enter Pembroke State in nineteen eighty-eight, but I took over the *Robesonian* (laughs) instead. So... My experience as far as education has been from the learning experiences of life. I've had the opportunity to work with many tribal elders, many tribal chiefs. But I also was taught many years ago that if I'm going to get my point across, I've got to learn how to speak (laughs.) And so it depends on what you term as education. I've had a world education. I've had a world view of education. That even falls into religion. So for me, that is my educational experience, as far as my background.

L.A. So the Red School House, who taught you there?

T.J. The Red School House was originally known as an American Indian Freedom School. It was founded by Eddie Benton-Banai, a member of the Ojibwe Tribe in Minnesota. And Eddie Benton-Banai was one of the original founders of the American Indian Movement. It was also a school founded by Vernon Bellecourt, Russell Means and many members of the American Indian Movement. So I went there in nineteen eighty-five because I was having difficulty here in Robeson County, because my mind and my viewpoint was that of a Native person. So Eddie Benton-Banai suggested I go to the Red School House, because they had a leadership program there that they enrolled me in. It was to help prepare me to be an American Indian leader. They also were teaching me to recognize that I had a responsibility not only to myself, but to all Native people. And so that's why I went there.

L.A. How much of an impact did that have on shaping your later life?

T.J. Oh, it had a major impact. Because understanding the Red School House, you know, your teachers were also activists. Your teachers were also tribal leaders. Your

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

teachers ranged from the Lakota Sioux to the Yankton Sioux. I had a Dine teacher, a teacher from the Navajo Nation, or what people should refer to, out of respect, as the Dine people. My teachers were also leaders in their tribal communities, they were also leaders in the American Indian Movement. They were fighting for justice, fighting against injustices that had been done throughout Indian country, whether it ranged throughout the United States, Canada, South American, and New Zealand, for that matter.

L.A. So when you came back to Robeson County (after graduating high school from the American Indian Freedom School's Red School House in Minneapolis-St. Paul) what was that like? What was happening in Robeson County?

T.J. Well, when I came back to Robeson County, the first thing, one of the first things that was going on, Governor Jim Hunt was proposing to bring a nuclear waste facility to Robeson County. And it was going to be on the borders of Robeson County and Scotland County. And so for myself and other members of the Tuscarora Nation, like a gentleman by the name of Mike Dunn, and my Uncle Coleman Locklear, we took it upon ourselves, the Tuscaroras, to begin to fight against this nuclear waste facility.

And so, that was one of the first thing I guess got involved with as a young activist. Because at the time I was only 18 years old. But we fought against the nuclear waste facility and ultimately won. Governor Jim Hunt at that time had to change his mind on his position about locating that facility in Robeson County. So that was one of the first times I realized that you could actually stand up and you could offer up opposition. You could stop detrimental things from going on in your community.

L.A. How did you meet Eddie Hatcher? Were you related in any way?

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

T.J. No, we were not related. Eddie Hatcher was a member of the community when I first met him. He was a student at Pembroke State University. We met because of the death of Jimmy Earl Cummings. Jimmy Earl Cummings, as you may or may not know, was killed by the sheriff's son in Robeson County, because of the protests, because of the injustices surrounding his death, Sheriff Hubert Stone's had killed Jimmy Earl Cummings, so Eddie Hatcher and I met as a result of a movement to surround the death of Jimmy Earl Cummings that would ultimately lead to a situation I got involved in as far as the *Robesonian*.

L.A. What led up to the decision to do what you did? What immediately preceded that?

T.J. Well, on the day before we took over the *Robesonian*, I was on my grandmother's farm, and I was helping her to gather corn. And my aunt pulled up and said to her that Eddie Hatcher had called. And that he was in a bad situation, and that I needed to get in contact with him right away. So I actually left the field, from pulling corn at my grandmother's. Because that was what our whole family did, we got together and did every year to help bring in the harvest (chuckles), you might say. And so I went down to my aunt's home and I called Eddie Hatcher and he told me to come over to his apartment right away. And so when I arrived you could tell he was very disturbed, he was very scared. And he told me he had received some threats from Hubert Stone's. He had received a threat from Hubert's son, Kevin Stone, who had actually been responsible for killing Jimmy Early Cummings. And so, what I did was, I listened to him, and how he had been in contact for the last several days with another individual, John Hunt, who had been in the Robeson County Jail. And he showed me some maps, Eddie Hatcher did.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

John Hunt had basically told him where to go to get these maps, where they were hidden. And so when Eddie rolled these maps out on the table of his apartment in this kitchen area, there was every known drug dealer, every known political leader in Robeson County, with the exception of a few black leaders of Fairmont, some black leaders from Laurinburg, and other areas were not listed on this map. But at the time in Robeson County, everybody knew who was dealing the drugs. Everybody knew who was the crooked politicians, and they were all on this map. And so, it really scared me, it frightened me. Because I recognized that Eddie had really stumbled on something that was a very big deal. And it was something to be frightened over.

And he told me he had received threats from Hubert Stone's by way of some of the deputies, and he had been warned and threatened by these people. And he just didn't know what to do. Because you have to keep in mind. Eddie Hatcher was a student at Pembroke State University at the time I met him. And so, a lot of these things were new to him. He was afraid. And I understood why he would be afraid. John Hunt was an inmate at the Robeson County Jail and he had been threatened. He was under Hubert Stone's thumb. And we didn't know it at the time, but he was an informant for the FBI. And so, when they got him into the sheriff's custody and he reached out to Eddie Hatcher and revealed to him that he was an FBI informant, he revealed to Eddie Hatcher that he had kept this map as his own protection, so that if the FBI ever double-crossed him, if Hubert Stone ever double-crossed him, he would have this map, this series of maps, as proof. You know, to protect himself, to protect his own interests, I guess you might say. So that's how Eddie and I came together.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

L.A. At first, Eddie talked about taking the courthouse. At what point did the *Robesonian* come up?

T.J. See, when I arrived at Eddie Hatcher's apartment that weekend, the first thing I suggested we do was to try to reach some outside parties. Eddie had been out of town that weekend, and with an named Barry Nakell and he had been at Barry Nakell's house in Chapel Hill. And basically he and Barry were trying to figure out what to do and who to contact. They were trying to figure out how to protect Eddie Hatcher's life and the life of John Hunt. What I suggested was that we call a gentleman by the name of Vernon Bellecourt. And I knew a gentleman who lived here in Robeson County and his name was Vernon Blackhorse. Vernon Blackhorse was a member of the Pine Ridge Sioux but had come here in the 1970s as a bodyguard in the American Indian Movement, and as a bodyguard was responsible for protecting the life of Dennis Banks. But Vernon in the 1970s met a local Tuscarora woman, married her and had children. He was still active in the American Indian Movement. He maintained a life here. I got on the phone with Vernon Blackhorse and he was at Eddie Hatcher's apartment within thirty minutes. Between he, Eddie and myself, Vernon came to the conclusion that he wanted to contact Dennis Banks. He wanted to contact Vernon Bellecourt, he wanted to bring a lot of other members of AIM her from across the United States to protect Eddie Hatcher and also to protect anyone who felt threatened by local law enforcement.

Well, Vernon Blackhorse says, give him "a day or so" and he'll get back in contact with us. So over the course of the weekend, law enforcement agents are parked outside of Eddie Hatcher's apartment. Which happened to be right down the street from my grandmother's, who lives in Pembroke right now. Over the weekend, I walked to my

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

grandmother's house on that Saturday, and surely enough, there was sheriff's deputies parked in the alley way, there were sheriff's deputies riding around. Eddie Hatcher received two or three threatening phone calls. So on Sunday morning after sitting up with Eddie Hatcher all night, Vernon Blackhorse, he came by to check on us, and Eddie Hatcher says, on Sunday, "They're gonna kill me. And Timothy, they're probably gonna kill you, too, because you've been seen here." And so he became afraid for me, because I had openly walked over to my grandmother's house.

And I told Eddie, "Well, what we can do, we can take over something." You know. Because in the 1970s, the Tuscaroras had taken over the courthouse in Lumberton. There was the takeover in Alcatraz. There was the takeover of Mount Rushmore. But also in 1970, 300-plus Tuscaroras from Robeson County, led by Keever Locklear of Prospect had occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. So Eddie and I came to the conclusion that we should occupy something. But what do we occupy?

He and I talked for a couple of hours and we both came to the conclusion that we would occupy the courthouse in Lumberton. But after driving by the courthouse in Lumberton, we came to the conclusion that we should occupy the *Robesonian,* because it was, in fact, the media. It was a place where we knew it would bring the attention of the world. We couldn't secure the courthouse on our own because it was too big. It was too huge. Originally, Tony Clark, who was a member of the Lumbee tribe, and Cedric Woods, who came from a very prominent family here in Robeson County, was going to take over the *Robesonian* with us. They actually drove us on that Sunday to scope out the *Robesonian* with us. Cedric and Tony were supposed to occupy it with us, but at the very...eleventh hour, I guess you might say, they backed out on us. But today, Cedric

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Woods is an attorney and Tony Clark is a chaplain for the North Carolina Department of Correction (laughs). A Native American chaplain.

So Eddie and I, we took over the *Robesonian* because of the fact that we knew we had to bring the attention of the world not only to Eddie Hatcher, not only to John Hunt, but also to Robeson County as a whole. We knew Jimmy Earl Cummings had been killed. There were many unsolved murders, not only of Native Americans, but of African-American people and of poor whites. So we said to each other, when we take over the *Robesonian*, we're going to bring the attention of the world to Robeson County. We're going to do everything we can to let the world know what's going on, in hopes that other people would come forward and tell their stories. And we faced the fact that it might be day that we might be killed, it might be a day that we went to prison for the rest of our lives. But the point was that in the conclusion to this, that the world would know Robeson County was a corrupt county, that you couldn't get a fair trial here.

We knew that there were more Native Americans on death row as a result of Hubert Stone and the corrupt actions being taken by (District Attorney) Joe Freeman Britt, we knew as a result of those actions we were taking that day that Joe Freeman Britt might be the very D.A. who would end up trying to give us a life sentence (laughs). And so we knew going into the *Robesonian* that this was going to bring the world's attention to the problems that existed here.

L.A. In terms of the *Robesonian*, what was the relationship between the community, African-American, Native American, and the newspaper? Do you remember any of that?

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

T.J. Oh, absolutely. Even though we did take over the *Robesonian* as a result of that day, a lot people in the community felt like the *Robesonian* had ignored the problems surrounding the problems here. It's like the *Robesonian* would report on it, but getting the truth out, the viewpoint of the native people, the viewpoint of the African-American leaders, a lot of people felt like they were not doing that. Because you have to remember, the view of the *Robesonian* then, and the view of the *Robesonian* now is that Robeson County is a very economically suppressed county, and it is. And they do not want to bring too much negative light on Robeson County because they feel like industries wouldn't come here and factories wouldn't come here. In a lot of ways, a lot of the minorities felt like the *Robesonian* was in fact protecting the position of the white interests, the white power players versus allowing the minorities to tell their story. Or versus allowing the truth concerning minority issues and minority problems from being told here. A lot of people just felt that way.

But Eddie Hatcher and I, we were not targeting the *Robesonian* because of that. We targeted the *Robesonian* because it was the media. Whether Donnie Douglas or any other members of the media were willing to tell that story before, they were going to tell that story now. And they were going to be a *part* of that story as well. And so it was a way to gain world media attention. It wasn't like a personal vendetta, I guess you might say toward the *Robesonian*, or any of its employees. Prior to that day, I didn't know anyone in particular who worked there to begin with.

L.A. What stands out in your mind about those hours while this was going on, about the interaction with the people who were held hostage?

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

T.J. In the beginning, I knew they were afraid. In the beginning they had every right to be afraid. But I would say about two hours into it, they became unafraid. More afraid, I think, about what was going on outside, in my opinion, than what was going on inside. Because during the time of the occupation, it was the employees of the *Robesonian* who began to answer the phones, they began to take down messages from media. Because the media, you have to understand, were calling in from all over the world trying to get quotes. The World News, ABC, CBS, any media that was out there were calling the Robesonian, and they were actually interviewing people who were part of the -- the hostages, I guess you might say. They were interviewing them, they were interviewing myself, and a lot of the talking outside, the FBI, the government officials, Eddie Hatcher was doing that. I was more or less answering questions from the media and keeping an eye on the hostages at the same time.

L.A. How many interviews did you give?

T.J. The whole incident lasted twelve hours. I can honestly say, I was answering the phone for three or four hours. Then I finally had to tell the people from the media, I couldn't talk to them anymore. I had to keep an eye on the hostages. I had to keep an eye on what was going on outside, and inside, at that time.

L.A. But the hostages were being interviewed as well**.**

T.J. Exactly. And I would be like, "We can't answer those kind of questions." Or, "I don't have time to talk, but you can talk if you want to." We were telling them they could call their families, we were telling them they could call anyone in the world. We had no issue with that.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

L.A. Were the hostages angry with you, after the initial part?

T.J. In the beginning, there were people who were angry, who were frustrated, yes they were. But I would say, maybe three or four hours into it, they began to agree, yes there were a lot of problems in Robeson County. They began to agree there had always been questions about Hubert Stone's associating with known drug kingpins, there were questions surrounding the death of Jimmy Earl Cummings. So they began to identify with us. I don't know if you would call it the Stockholm Syndrome or not. But in reality, during that time, they were in complete agreement with why Eddie Hatcher and I took the newspaper over. (Staff writer) Donnie Douglas and (editor) Bob Horne even said to me personally, they were surprised something like that hadn't been taking place in Robeson County because of the way minorities had been treated, and even the way poor whites had been treated. Because you have to understand.

At that time in Robeson County, if you were white, and you were poor, they put you in the same category as native people or as black people. I've heard a lot of whites in Lumberton look at other whites and call them "pure white trash." And that was before the occupation of the *Robesonian*. So there was a social status here that existed prior to the takeover of the *Robesonian* where the attitude of the political leaders was that you keep people in their place. And that was a part of the problem. That was a part of what led up to the *Robesonian* was the attitude of people in society. There were the haves and the have-nots. And it seemed like those who had it always found a way to retain it, either through the corruption or through the political system. There were so many ways that that control was maintained over minorities in Robeson County....

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

When we took over the *Robesonian*, we had a list of demands.

L.A. You didn't ask for amnesty at the end of this situation. There were other demands, primarily related to these concerns that you've been talking about. And finally that you wanted to be bound over to federal authorities, or outside authorities. And a federal jury acquitted you. But then the state came back after you. Do you think that in the end this faith you placed in the system was maybe misplaced? How did you feel in the long run about the trust you put in the justice system?

T.J. Well, when Eddie Hatcher and I were found not guilty by the jury in Raleigh, North Carolina, I thought it was over with. Even the jurors themselves were quoted in the media as saying that Hubert Stone is the one who should be locked up, that Joe Freeman Britt is the one who should be locked up, investigated and incarcerated. And they said that openly in the courtroom on the day I was found not guilty. On the day I was found not guilty, the jurors embraced me and cried on my shoulders. The agreement was, after we took over the *Robesonian*, that if we were found not guilty on the federal court level, that we would not be indicted in Robeson County because it would have been a conflict of interest. Because we were also saying that Joe Freeman Britt was corrupt. We were also saying that he was the Number One prosecutor in the world, in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, even, for having --

L.A. You mean...I'm sorry, I interrupted you...you mean "the Number One prosecutor" in terms of putting people on Death Row?

T.J. -- yeah. He's in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for that. And so, the deal was, he would not try to prosecute us for that, because when we took over the *Robesonian*, he was the district attorney at that time. So, the federal government

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

concluded, the state concluded, that it would have been a conflict of interest for him, the D.A., to prosecute us on the state level, but they would also have to bring in a special prosecutor because of the conflict of interest involved with Joe Freeman Britt. But after my federal trial, after I was found completely not guilty of all charges related to the *Robesonian*, two months later, I was indicted by a grand jury in Robeson County. What happened was, my attorney, Bob Warren, called me on the phone. I was living in Charlotte, North Carolina at the time. And my attorney says, "I'm not telling you what to do, or how to do it. But you have friends all over the world, you have friends all over the United States, and you have friends in the Iroquois Nation in New York." He says, "You do what you want to do. But I would not turn myself over to state authorities."

And so when I got off the phone with Bob Warren, he said, "Oh, by the way. That son of a bitch just became a judge." And I said, "Who are you talking about?" And he said, "Joe Freeman Britt was sworn in Superior Court judge by default of the death of (slain Indian Legal Aid activist) Julian Pierce." So that last thing (laughing) Joe Freeman Britt did as district attorney in Robeson County was to indict Eddie Hatcher and I on state charges of 14 counts of kidnapping. Each count would have carried a life sentence. But we had already withstood the federal trial. We had already withstood the attempt of the federal government .to prosecute us over the occupation of the *Robesonian*. So the last day of him being a D.A., he indicted us. And he became Superior Court judge that evening, sworn in that evening after getting us indicted that morning. And so I ran. (Laughing.) I did not turn myself in to state authorities. I went on a...I left Charlotte and I went to Cherokee and I stayed in a place called Snow Bird, the community of Snow Bird. I made my way to the Onandaga Indian Nation in New York, as a result of being indicted

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

on kidnapping charges. Because Onandaga Indian Nation is a sovereign nation. They're not under the jurisdiction of the United States...

I had had my day in court...I want people in history to remember that I was never guilty of anything. That is an eight-hour deliberation. One of the jurors told me she was ready to find me not guilty before the judge even gave her instructions, to find me guilty or innocent. She had already made up her mind before the trial was over with that I had acted on behalf of these people here. When we took over the *Robesonian*, we had a list of demands. We asked for a special investigation into corruption into Robeson County, we asked that it be an outside investigation because we could not trust any local law enforcement. We couldn't trust any local investigators, even if it was the State Bureau of Investigation. We felt like the State Bureau of Investigation was just as guilty as the Robeson County Sheriff's Department.

And so we asked the governor for an outside investigation. We asked him to immediately close and condemn the Robeson County Jail, because there were people in the Robeson County Jail prior to Billy McKellar dying of asthma, other people had died in the Robeson County Jail. But one of the issues we raised in the *Robesonian* was the death of Billy McKellar. He was a Muslim. We felt like that was one of the reasons he was allowed to die in the Robeson County Jail was the fact that he was a black Muslim, a very outspoken black Muslim who was from Lumberton.

And because Eddie Hatcher and I had a world view of religion, we didn't have an identifiable religion. I followed the Native American way of religion. Eddie Hatcher was a member of the Southern Baptist church. But here it was, we knew, and had concluded that they had let this black guy die in the Robeson County Jail because he was a Muslim.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

That was out feelings and we asked for an investigation because all this man needed was an asthma pump, and they had let him run out of asthma medicine several days before he actually needed it. All they had to do was send out a deputy or whatever office was necessary to get this man an asthma pump. He died as a result of not having that. So we were angry not only because he was black, but because he was a member of the Black Muslim Nation.

L.A. What do you feel was the long-term impact of the action you took?

T.J. I think that the long-term impact is that we forced change. In 1989, I spoke at Syracuse University and Betty Shabazz, who is the widow of Malcolm X, was there and she heard me speak. Because it was a speaker's series, and the next night, Dennis Banks was going to speak at Syracuse University, and the following night, Betty Shabazz was going to speak. And Betty Shabazz said to me, "Timothy, you forced changed upon those people in that place where you come from, and you will continue to force change." And so even though Robeson County is a better place today, to a degree, I feel, for minorities, I feel like it had to be forced upon people. The dirty laundry had to be aired to the world about Robeson County being a corrupt county.

Even today, there's still a lot of changes that need to take place to benefit not only minorities. As a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Robeson County has suffered because we have lost so many factories, and that has had a watering, trickle-down effect because of the economy. Because when people are out of work they turn to alcohol, they turn to drugs. That is big problem here today. For me, the struggle continues, and I would like for people to look back and say there were native people like Eddie Hatcher and myself who stood up. Just like Henry Berry Lowrie stood up.

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

Everybody in Robeson County doesn't love us. But we knew that going in. When you're an activist, when you're a radical, whatever you want to call me. But in my lifetime, I know, that I have seen change for the better in Robeson County. The court system needs improving. I don't like the Uncle Toms in the political system. Everybody rode Eddie Hatcher's back and my back. A lot of the Indians who are in political positions of power today, they have forgotten who put them there. Even some of the African-American leaders have forgotten who helped to make that change a reality. And so, for me, coming back to Robeson County, I felt I was used as a stepping stone. And that's one of the reasons I think Eddie became so angry. He had been used. A lot of people used us for their own political gain.

That's the sad part about it. And yet, if you look at history, everybody didn't love Henry Berry Lowrie, everybody didn't love Martin Luther King. And so when you go into this, even though you do things that benefit people, you come to the realization that there are still going to be people that hate you because you are the one who did it, you are the one who stood up. When *they* should have been standing up.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Lorraine Ahearn, 3/30/2012

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Timothy Jacobs

Interview number U-0607 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.